News release

Update to Met Office winter 2006/7 forecast

1 November 2006

An assessment of new data at the Met Office has shown that this coming winter is most likely to be average or warmer-than-average across the UK, with rainfall levels also at average or above-average levels through the months of December through to February.

This is a move in the forecast, as previous predictions had indicated a finely balanced situation for temperature and precipitation. Later in the season, there remains a signal for lower temperatures (relative to average) and an increase in the frequency of cold snaps.

A number of large scale influences on the winter season are still emerging and causing additional uncertainty. These include the continuing evolution of North Atlantic Ocean temperatures and the weak El Niño, both of which could yet develop to favour a colder/drier outlook for northern Europe. These effects will be monitored and assessed in the December update.

The Met Office updates its seasonal forecasts each month as more data becomes available. The UK's national weather service has used a range of information, including expert judgement and computer simulations, to try to capture the detail for the coming winter.

Despite massive improvements in forecasting the weather in the short-term, the techniques used in forecasting for the months ahead are still being developed and refined. The Met Office leads the field in producing and communicating these types of forecasts, which are often of considerable value to long-term planners.

Notes:

It is expected that updates to the forecast will be issued at the beginning of December (10 a.m. on 5 December) and January.
A monthly appraisal of the winter will start in early January 2007.
Winter, in this context, is defined as the months of Dec, Jan and Feb, although it is recognised that winter weather can extend beyond this period, especially in northern Britain.
El Niño is a warming in the tropical Pacific Ocean which accompanies a reversal in the trade winds. It affects the weather and climate across many parts of the globe and is the largest climatic event that occurs on a regular basis anywhere on the planet.

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